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SOURCE Promyshlennost' Stroitel'nykh Materialov

USSR CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS INDUSTRY INCREASES OUTPUT  
OF CONSUMER GOODS; QUALITY CRITICIZED

[Comment: This report contains information on the increases being made by the USSR construction materials industry in the production of building items for sale to consumers, and the complaints made by consumers about these products. Some main administrations have started increasing the output of consumer goods; others have been slow to do so.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.<sup>7</sup>

Increases in Consumer Goods Production

A number of plants of the USSR construction materials industry have started increasing their output of consumer goods for the open market.(1)

Lately, even those plants which were not producing consumer goods previously have now organized or are organizing such production and, in the second half of 1953, the supply of these goods for sale to the public will be increased.

In terms of value of goods produced, enterprises of the Ministry of Construction Materials Industry USSR fulfilled their quota of the first 8 months of 1953 by 104.8 percent.(2) This ministry incorporates 45 enterprises comprising 3,260 shops, 46 percent of which have up to 40 workers, 16 percent have up to 15 workers, and 13 percent have up to 25 workers. Only 14 percent of the shops have more than 40 workers.(3)

During the first 8 months of 1953, consumer goods production was increased over the same period of 1952. Glavsantekhprom (Main Administration of Sanitary and Technical Products Industry) increased its output 40 percent; Glavstandartdom

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(Main Administration of Standard Housing Industry), 39 percent, and Glavstroykeramika (Main Administration of Construction Ceramics Industry), 29 percent.(2)

In 1953, the construction materials industry is expected to supply the trading organizations with an additional 1.5 million square meters of window glass, 20 million units of slate, 150,000 tons of cement, and 2.5 million square meters of soft roofing materials such as rubberoid, pergamyn, asphalt roofing felt, and tar paper.

The industry will also produce more enameled dishware, glazed pottery, hot- and cold-water faucets, door locks, small ceramic barrels, and gypsum architectural products.(4)

A survey made by the Ministry of Construction Materials Industry USSR disclosed that the plants subordinate to Glavsantekhprom and Glavstroykeramika can produce a greater quantity of products for the open market than the original plan calls for. For this reason, the plants of these main administrations have been assigned additional quotas and, by the end of 1953, will have to produce an additional 1,000 cast iron enameled wash basins, 1,000 bath tub supports, 5,000 hot- and cold-water faucets, 85,000 units of sanitary and toilet ceramic products, and other accessories.

Between 1953 and 1955, the output of bath tubs is to be increased threefold, water heating units fourfold, and hardware almost double. An increase will also be made in the production of kitchenware, sanitary equipment, and other objects.(5)

Plants of Glavstroykeramika have, for the first time, started producing tanks made from faience. These tanks are being produced by the Shchekino and Tavtmanovo plants and will be used as containers to salt down cucumbers and cabbage.

The ceramics industry has also started producing porcelain-faience beakers, milk glasses, breadboxes, and bottles. The acid-proof products plants of the industry expect to produce livestock feeding boxes and poultry water troughs. The facing materials plants have already started producing ceramic slabs for seed boxes.

Plants of Glavsantekhprom have started expanding their output of small boilers [sic, furnaces?]. In October 1953, trading organizations will be supplied 3,000 square meters of boilers [total area taken up by boiler space?], or twice the amount obtained in the previous month.(6)

The cement, slate, lime, and other plants of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have also been increasing their supply of construction materials for kol-khozes and for the public.

The Estonian "Punane-Kunda" Cement Plant fulfilled its September 1953 deliveries to kolkhoses and individual builders in the first 10 days of the month.

The Riga "Seguna" Roofing Paper Plant shipped tons of carloads of roofing paper to warehouses in Barnaul, Novo-Kuznetsk, Tomsk, Tyumen', and other cities and oblasts of the USSR.

A major portion of the corrugated slate produced by the Brotseny Construction Materials Combine is for use in the kolkhoses. In September 1953, this combine shipped more than 100 carloads of this roofing material to trading organizations in the Belorussian SSR and in Moskovskaya, Novgorodskaya, and Velikolukskaya oblasts for sale to kolkhoses.

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The Estonian "Yavarkandi" Glass Plant and the Riga "Sarkandaugava" Glass Plant have also shipped a considerable quantity of glass to the warehouses.(6)

The Riga Slate Plant produced 500,000 units of stained and 200,000 units of ordinary slate above its 10-month quota. The major part of the plant's output during the past few months was shipped to trading organizations for sale to kolkhozes and to the public.(7)

The Riga "Rigips" Plant has also increased its output of products for the open market. In August and the first 20 days of September 1953, the construction materials plants of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania shipped about 600 carloads of various types of building materials to the kolkhozes and individual builders.(8)

The construction materials enterprises of the Ukrainian SSR have also been expanding their output and variety of products for the consumer.

Building materials are sold in 30 stores in Kiev. Glavstroysbyt (Main Administration for the Sale of Construction Materials Products), Ministry of Construction Materials Industry USSR, soon will open a special warehouse in the city to handle building materials.

During the first 7 months of 1953, the Kiev branch office of Glavstroysbyt supplied trading organizations with more than 3,000 sanitary and technical items made from faience and with more than 215,000 square meters of glass for sale to the consumer. During this period, individual builders in Kiev and the surrounding villages purchased more than 100,000 tons of cement, more than 20.2 million units of slate, and a large quantity of brick and tile.(9)

In September 1953, the Leningrad branch office of Glavstroysbyt shipped more than 200,000 square meters of glass, about 2 million square meters of soft roofing material, and 32 carloads of slate to consumers in various USSR oblasts.

In the following month, this branch office increased its shipment of building materials. Consumers in Moskovskaya, Bryanskaya, Vitebskaya, Vladimirskaia, Kalininskaya, and other oblasts got tens of thousands of square meters of soft roofing material.

In the middle of October 1953, the Leningrad "Vydvishinets" Plant shipped about 60,000 square meters of rubberoid and pergamen to Stalingradskaya and Kurganskaya oblasts.(10)

In 1953, building organizations and the civilian population of Alma-Ata were short of wall building materials. The building organizations were supplied brick only according to the order of Gorplan (City Planning Organization) and the civilian population was supplied with brick only in limited quantities once a week.

During 8 months of 1953, Alma-Ata Brick Plant No 3 supplied the city with 3,054,000 bricks above quota. The plant now has been meeting brick demands of builders, industrial plants, the city's civilian population, and the kolkhozes and sovkhoses of Alma-Atinskaya Oblast.

Although the number of its consumers has increased, the plant has an oversupply of 1.5 million bricks, primarily because the city's building organizations have not been taking the brick produced.(10)

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While some of the plants of the construction materials industry have increased their output of consumer goods for the open market, many of them have failed to do so.(1) Included in the lagging group of plants are those which are supposed to be the principal producers of products for the open market.

Although the Ministry of Construction Materials Industry USSR fulfilled its quota for the first 8 months of 1953 by 104.8 percent, in terms of value of goods produced, it fulfilled the quota and additional assignments decreed by the government only 98.2 percent.(2) Nor was there any great improvement in performance in September 1953.(1)

The construction materials industry is producing 32 different types of products for the open market, but the quota for the 12 principal types is not being fulfilled, primarily because of the lag of the main producers.(2)

The introduction of new products is not only the responsibility of the main administrations and the subordinate producing plants, but also of Glavstroysteklo, which is in the best position to ascertain the demands of the consumer and thus could convey these demands to the producers. However, Glavstroysteklo has been limiting its operations strictly to sales functions. The fact is that it has not been carrying out even these functions properly.(1)

Mirrors and general glassware are the products of Glavstroysteklo (Main Administration of Construction Glass Industry) which have the greatest appeal to the consumer. Nevertheless, during the first 8 months of 1953, the quotas for mirrors and general glassware were fulfilled only 76 and 85 percent, respectively. Many plants of Glavstroysteklo have not been fulfilling the orders of other ministries for polarized glass for mirrors.(2)

Despite the fact that the glass industry has the potential with which to increase its output of better goods for the consumer (1), Glavstroysteklo has been making very little effort either to expand the variety or to improve the quality of products of the glass industry. During the first 8 months of 1953, the glass industry increased its output of products for the consumer only 5 percent over the same period of 1952.

There is a great demand for four glass, different sizes of glass pipes and fittings, artistic glass, glassware, and mirrors, but these items are being produced only in limited quantities.

The Gor'kiy Glass Plant has a special shop for producing mirrors, but the plant has been producing only a large-sized mirror of poor quality.(2)

The Konstantinovka "Avtosteklo" Glass Plant has constantly lagged in mirror production. Since the beginning of 1953, this plant has been behind in the production of more than 5,000 square meters of glass for mirrors.(1)

The Gusev Glass Plant imeni Bratinskiy, one of the largest glass plants in the USSR and principal supplier of polarized glass to the Riga "Krasnyy Oktyabr" Mirror Factory has made no improvements in its operations for producing ordinary glassware or glass for mirrors. The plant has been supplying the mirror factories with inferior glass.

Besides supplying furniture makers with mirrors, the Riga factory produces table and wall mirrors for sale to the public. In 1953, this factory increased its mirror output almost three times above the previous level.

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Eighty-two percent of its mirrors are first quality. However, production costs are still enormous, primarily because of the type of glass it has been getting from the Gusev plant.

This glass has many flaws. Scratches and stains have been found on many pieces. Investigations have shown that 50 percent of the scratches have been due to the poor selection of polishing abrasives. Five percent of the glass has been tarnished; dullness in the glass has been very apparent. Twenty-five percent of the glass supplied to the Riga factory has not been cut at right angles; the glass has been considerably out of proportion as to length and width. Labels have been glued on the glass very carelessly, and spots have been very noticeable. Quite frequently, these spots concealed some flaw.(2)

Although it has been planned to produce transparent glass, the glass industry failed to supply a single meter of this glass for the open market. Glass for hotbeds was expected to be put in production in September 1953. However, some plants fell considerably behind. For instance, during September 1953 the Gomel' Glass Plant produced only 2,700 square meters instead of 14,000 square meters.

The glass industry has failed to take any effective measures to increase its output of consumer goods. Glass-beveling workers and others engaged in fabricating mirror glass for the open market are paid less than similarly qualified workers performing similar operations in the production of other glass products. The same is true in the case of technologists and engineering-technical personnel.(1)

During the first 8 months of 1953, Glavstroysteklo fulfilled its quota for glass and glassware only 75 percent.(2)

Not only the glass industry, but other branches of the construction materials industry have been slow in increasing their output of consumer goods. Some of the main administrations have been producing consumer goods only in extremely limited quantities; others have been very slow in organizing the production of these goods. Plants on the republic level have been supplying very limited quantities of earthenware pipe or ceramic products.

Some main administrations have been continuing to produce a poor variety of products. Glavstandartom (Main Administration of Standard Housing Industry) expected to produce single dwelling homes, but it has not yet developed any satisfactory house plan which would meet the demands of the consumer purchaser.(1)

The "M-2-52" and the "M-4-52" types of standard houses produced by Glavstandartdom were criticized at the All-Union Conference of Architects held in Leningrad in July 1953.

These houses are uncomfortable, the exterior is unattractive, and they have several other defects. Although the conference declared the entire "M" series as unsuitable, Glavstandartdom has continued to emphasize the production of this series and has been completely cutting the production of all other series.(12)

Glavstandartdom also continues to supply the market with ordinary furniture fixtures such as stools and pedestals.

Glavstroykeramika is another main administration which has not expanded the variety of its products. Before the war, the Kirov Faience Plant was the only plant in the USSR which was producing open wicker-work biscuit dishes. Although demand for these dishes was great then, they are not being produced by any plant now.(1)

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During recent years, the output of door locks, enamel bathtubs, heating and ventilating units, and ordinary faience products was increased considerably, but the increased output has not kept pace with the demands of the rapidly increasing construction projects or the demands of the individual consumer. The construction of dwellings, and of communal and children's establishments has been delayed because of the lack of pipes, fittings, sinks, and washbasins.

Not only will sanitary products have to be increased in quantity, but they will have to be improved in quality. In the plants of Glavstantekhprom and of Glavstroykeramika, defective products result in 15-18 percent losses of over-all production.

The consumers have been complaining that the chrome- and nickel-plated fittings tarnish quickly, the basins are covered with dark colored stains, and the faience products are glazed poorly and have a yellowish tinge. Drains sometimes let the water out of the basins very slowly; at other times, the water drains very rapidly because of the excessive gap in the pipe connections.(5)

Glavstantekhprom will seriously have to consider the production of satisfactory and cheap heating units. One of Khar'kov's warehouses trading in building items established an extensive trade in radiators purchased by the civilian population and kolkhoz farmers. This warehouse has also been selling steam pipes and water heating fixtures. Despite this, not one of the city's plants, including the boiler and radiator works, has yet started producing small-sized boilers which would give sufficient heat and yet have low fuel consumption.

Common brick and slag concrete blocks are the items which have been in greatest demand at the 11 warehouses in Khar'kov. Quite frequently, the buyer has not been altogether satisfied with the quality of these items, and therefore has been demanding hollow brick and facing brick instead.

The Khar'kov consumer also has been demanding such items as linkrusta <sup>7</sup>/<sub>n</sub> paper base for linoleum<sup>7</sup> and linoleum. In 1952, the Kogan' Cardboard Factory promised to start producing linkrusta, but Glavkrovlya (Main Administration of the Roofing Industry) had not helped the enterprise in its efforts.

Although the government has been demanding that special attention be given to the production and trade of consumer goods, many plants of the construction materials industry have been failing to do so. Until now, a number of enterprises, including the Khar'kov Cement Plant, which have been supplying the warehouses in Khar'kov with building materials, have done nothing about supplying the public with cement, alabaster, and lime in sacks. Instead, the plants continue to supply the materials in bulk.

According to the order of the Ministry of Trade USSR, the warehouse must deliver the purchased building materials to the consumer. However, the Khar'kov Oblast Administration of Local Trade has not provided the warehouses with enough trucks, and the consumer is forced to pay double for the materials which he purchases.(12)

In September 1953, the Riga Slate Plant was forced to suspend deliveries of slate to consumers because of the lack of zinc nails ordinarily supplied with the slate. The plant has been getting nails from the Vostresensk Machine Shop, but the latter enterprise not only has been failing to supply this plant with the necessary zinc nails, but the nails which it does produce are poor in quality.

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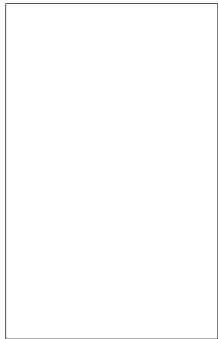
  
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Since the beginning of 1953, the Riga plant had shipped 5.5 million units of slate to consumers without zinc nails; the trading organizations began to complain about this. As a result, the plant was forced to suspend its deliveries of slate and now has more than 800,000 units of slate on its premises. Meanwhile, rural builders in Velikolukskaya, Kalininskaya, Vologodskaya, and other oblasts have been waiting for slate.(7)

SOURCES

1. Moscow, Promyshlennost' Stroitel'nykh Materialov, 7 Oct 53
2. Ibid., 3 Oct 53
3. Ibid., 22 Aug 53
4. Ibid., 12 Sep 53
5. Ibid., 5 Sep 53
6. Ibid., 23 Sep 53
7. Ibid., 24 Oct 53
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